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WHAT THE EXPERIENCE OF THE LENINGRAD TELEGRAPH STATION TEACHES US

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In 1946 the Leningrad telegraph station staff achieved substantial success in their efforts to raise the standard of work. The percentage of errors, as compared with the previous year, was considerably reduced. This is mainly the result of the sound working organization of the operational inspection service, headed by communications foreman A. I. Ushakova.

Telegram inspection at the Leningrad telegraph station, as at every other, is not continuous but selective spot checking. However, the choosing of telegrams for inspection is carried out here in a skillful manner. Checking is done in small batches of 60, 40, 35 and even 20-25 telegrams. This is inconvenient for the inspectors because they often have to leave their posts and go to the machines for the control tapes and transmitted messages; moreover, the number of entries on the work sheets is increased. But the inspectors put up with the inconveniences, for by this method inspection is more frequent and each operator is checked from two to seven times a month.

The account of inspection results is clearly presented. The total errors are worked out daily, at 10-day intervals, and monthly. The computation is done in two ways: by shifts and by telegraphic apparatus systems. (This shows the progress made in mastering a new technique, e.g., that of a teletype machine.) Careful study of statistical reports of errors enables the telegraph station administration to strive effectively for a higher standard of work.

Inspection of reception is even more frequent than that of transmission. During the past 2 months twice as many "received" as "transmitted" telegrams were inspected. From time to time a continuous check is made of all telegrams received (as well as continuous correction before delivery).

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An "inspection of inspectors" was carried out three times in the course of the past year. Responsible telegraph workers checked telegrams already checked by the inspection service. No additional errors were discovered.

The most interesting and important aspect of supervision at the Leningrad telegraph office is the contact with personnel who make mistakes. The chief of the operational inspection service does not confine herself to pointing out every error to the offender by means of a memorandum. She has long talks with such persons, but not so much to reprimand as to endeavor to ascertain the causes of the error and teach them how to avoid mistakes in the future. The director of the telegraph station sends for the more persistent offenders and talks to them.

Each mistake is entered on the defect board which is filled in daily and ultimately becomes the subject of discussion on the 5-minute changeovers. Much attention is devoted to improving the local broadcasting programs and the wall newspaper in the telegraph office.

The main object of the socialist rivalry between shifts is the effort to attain high quality. According to the rules devised here, a shift loses 10 points for each error -- no small matter when one considers that in order to gain 10 points a shift has to send about 6,000 telegrams above the plan figure. This ratio, 6,000 telegrams transmitted in excess of quota, counting as much as is lost by one mistake, indicates, better than many words, the importance which is attached to quality in the Leningrad telegraph station.

The administrative measures taken with regard to persons responsible for errors are fairly severe. It is also important that they are regular. Every day the operational inspection chief reports to the director all cases of faulty work from the past 24 hours. The director is presented with the personal cards of those concerned; these cards show all their errors and penalties since the beginning of the year. In this way the station supervisor judges the offender, not by one isolated mistake, but by his work as a whole. Hence, there are different penalties for equally serious errors: warning, caution, bearing the cost of the official telegram, correcting the error, reprimand, severe reprimand with a warning, demotion, and, the most extreme measure, relegation to the delivery service.

The success already achieved by the Leningrad telegraph workers in striving for quality indicates that complete elimination of mistakes is feasible.

What are the methods by which this objective can be achieved?

In the first place, the activity of the operational inspection staff must be extended. The Ministry's instructions are that not less than 10 percent of the telegrams sent shall be checked. Leningrad comes close to this figure but has not reached it. Moreover, the established 10 percent is only a minimum, and efforts must be made to exceed it. Why are fewer persons than necessary engaged in checking in the Leningrad telegraph station? Economy in inspection is false economy.

Sounder-apparatus work is not checked at all. It is asserted that nothing is gained by such inspection since the operator unfailingly, as it were, determines the time when the Morse control apparatus starts. Inclusion of an additional resistance into the circuit upsets the regulation. Of course, a hidden check is better than an obvious one and gives a more accurate idea of the ordinary work of the person inspected. But, even an obvious check, in spite of all its defects, is better than complete lack of checking. Moreover, is it not true that the problem of a hidden check on sounder transmission has already been solved?

Subsequent checking reveals mistakes and makes it possible to judge the quality of a telegrapher's work. But the mistake is discovered afterwards.

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The telegram with its distorted text has already left Leningrad, and the original of the message has only just reached the inspector. Correction follows, but after delay. There was recently a lively discussion on the following case in the Leningrad telegraph station: the text of the telegraph read "Mama is dying," but the bode operator sent "Mama is dead." The message was checked and the mistake discovered -- 5 hours later.

It may be that subsequent checking does not find all transmission errors but only a tenth of them; but why not find even that tenth rapidly? As a sample we took 16 errors, discovered by subsequent checking. Only in three cases was the correction made in the first 2 hours after dispatch of the distorted messages; two corrections were sent with a delay of 2-3 hours; two more with a delay of 3-6 hours; eight with a delay of 6-12 hours; and, finally, one correction with over 24 hours delay.

Such slowness in correction is partly explained by the dilatoriness of inspectors and partly by incorrect arrangement of their duty list. As is common knowledge, a telegraph station works round the clock; however, at night, from 2300 till 0900, there is no inspection. Night control tapes are not inspected until morning.

So far, when talking of inspection we have had only one type in mind, that of subsequent inspection. However, there is another type, immediate, which is carried out during the actual process of transmitting. Immediate checking was widely used in the Leningrad post office before the war. Then, for each high-speed apparatus, with a load of not less than 60 percent, there were three workers, the receiver, bode operator, and inspector. The last-named used to check continuously all telegrams sent, immediately after their transmission. Corrections of errors made during transmission were made immediately after the telegram was sent.

Work without these inspectors was necessitated by war conditions. It is now time to restore the old system. Inspection of this kind prevents mistakes and increases communications capacity. It makes the maintenance of the telegraph apparatus more expensive but such expenditure is necessary.

Among workers of the Leningrad telegraph station there are many grievances against neighboring cities; in particular, the Moscow telegraph workers at the receiving end often do not count the number of words. This gives rise to misunderstanding. Three cases of errors in one shift were registered against Comrade Krasheninnikova, a Leningrad operator. In one telegram she left out a word, in another, the signature, in a third, a whole line of 11 words. Her errors were indisputable and she was penalized but, the question arises, where was the receiver at the Moscow telegraph station? Why did she not raise the alarm, why did she not ask for the "lost words"? Obviously, she was not counting the words.

It is very important to restore work in pairs. The expediency of this method is universally recognized. However, the single USSR chart of daily output of operators before the war has not yet been restored. The Leningrad operator works her shift with two, sometimes three Moscow telegraph operators. Moreover, they vary from day to day.

Operators at opposite ends of the same line should work by arrangement. The Leningrad telegraph office, which has already changed over to the four-shift plan, is ready to introduce work in pairs. Have its leaders brought the problem of restoring the All-Union chart of the daily output of operators to the notice of the Ministry of Communications? No, they have not. They have clearly underestimated the enormous importance of work in pairs.

Proper working places might help to improve the quality of work. In this connection, there is not sufficient light at the machines. Before the war each work place had a lamp with shade. It is time to return to this. It is

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also time to ensure that necessary furniture is supplied. Such trifles as broken typewriter keys are also worth remembering.

During the blockade, persons with a 3-5-grade education were taken on in the Leningrad telegraph office. But even the 7 years of education now required of new entrants are not sufficient for a person to grasp rapidly the sense of a telegram, whether transmitted or received. Most of the telegraphers work without understanding the meaning of the text. Recently one of them received the telegram "shall give further particulars of date of arrival." After a little thought, she altered the word "date," as being obviously wrong, to "base," although the sense, of course, required "date." /In Russian, "bazu," "bazu," and "datu" respectively/. Shift supervisors are asked about such "incomprehensible" words as "manikurist" /manicurist/, "pilomaterial" /saxa timber/, etc. Many telegraphers are not well versed in the Russian language. There are often grammatical errors in the written explanations which they give in correspondence concerning their errors.

One cannot but approve the initiative of the Leningrad telegraph station which has introduced a 70-hour course of Russian-language studies in the 4-month training program. The length of the course speaks for itself; in 70-hours one can only refresh existing knowledge. Young operators, and many of those who have been working at the telegraph station for a long time, need systematic study in reading and writing classes. There are no such classes in the Leningrad telegraph station, although there previously were such classes, and they were highly regarded.

The telegraph station library has discontinued its mobile branch in the apparatus rooms. The library is not endeavoring to make active book readers, of as many operators as possible. Evidently, the enormous importance of this, even from a purely productive point of view, is not realized.

When speaking of control of errors in a telegraph office, usually only transmission and reception are considered. However, mistakes in delivery are of almost greater importance. For 2 months the staff of the Leningrad central telegraph office checked on the delivery of 130 telegrams. It was disclosed that seven addresses (5.5 percent) did not receive their telegrams, although the messengers "checked off" for their delivery.

The inspection system set up for the work of telegram deliverers is unsatisfactory. The central telegraph office delivers tens of thousands of telegrams every month, and the total number checked in 2 months was 130 telegrams. A total of 100 control letters a month were sent. Delivery is the worst plague spot in the activity of the Leningrad telegraph office, and it should be submitted to searching scrutiny.

The Minister of Communications has repeatedly stressed in his orders the importance of eliminating defective work in telegraph offices. The Leningrad telegraphers must comply with this basic requirement and achieve decisive success in their work.

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